United Nations CEDAW/C/SR.1542

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
9 November 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-eighth session

Summary record of the 1542nd meeting*
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 31 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Sixth periodic report of Israel (CEDAW/C/ISR/6; CEDAW/C/ISR/QPR/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Israel took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Raz Shechter** (Israel) said that the advancement and promotion of gender equality and women's rights had been on the agenda of every Government since the foundation of the State of Israel. Equality was a fundamental principle enshrined in its declaration of independence and the 1951 Equal Rights for Women Law. Between 2010 and 2014, some 50 laws and amendments had bolstered gender equality and women's empowerment. Israel had been the first State Member of the United Nations to officially recognize in its legislation the importance of the women's participation at all decision-making levels of national institutions and mechanisms. It was committed to achieving equality and leaving no one behind in its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. During her visit in September 2016 the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, had commended the work towards accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the Government had enacted legislation that required women to be included in public bodies established by the Government on issues of national importance, including peace negotiations. The Israeli international development agency had been actively training women from around the world in leadership skills. In September 2014, an interministerial committee on domestic violence had been set up and its findings and recommendations published in July 2016. Another important achievement had been the adoption of resolution 61/1 of the Commission on the Status of Women on preventing and eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace (E/2017/27-E/CN.6/2017/21), which her country had sponsored.

4. Civil society's contributions had been given full consideration during the drafting of the sixth periodic report. Since 2012, the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs had been participating in a joint project aimed at improving cooperation between State authorities and civil society organizations on reporting to the treaty bodies. In 2017, the two Ministries had initiated a round-table project in different academic institutes nationwide that had provided a unique platform for discussion between civil society, academics and government representatives on such topics as the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Israelis of Ethiopian decent, the Bedouin population, women and persons with disabilities.

5. While her country faced many security challenges, it remained committed to peace. It had reached peace accords with Egypt and Jordan and continued to strive to reach a historical compromise with the Palestinians that would fulfil its long-standing desire to see two States living side by side in peace and security. In order to achieve that goal, Israelis and Palestinians needed to work together; there was no doubt that Israeli and Palestinian women had much to contribute to that process.

6. **Ms. Palmor** (Israel) said that her first name was composed of the initials of her paternal grandmother, who had died young, shortly after the Second World War, and her maternal grandmother, who had had been sent to die immediately on her arrival at the Auschwitz concentration camp given that, as an elderly woman, her life had been considered worthless.

7. As part of her country's increasing efforts to combat trafficking in persons, an interministerial committee had been set up to examine the possibility of criminalizing the use of prostitution. While the law in Israel criminalized acts such as procurement or maintaining a brothel, with the exception of the use of child prostitution, it did not criminalize the use of prostitution services. The interministerial committee had heard

personal testimonies and expert opinions and studied models adopted in other countries with the aim of strengthening protection for women from exploitation and trafficking. Its concluding report was currently being finalized. As a result of its work, in July 2017, two private members' bills criminalizing the use of prostitution services had been approved in preliminary readings in the Knesset.

8. Another interministerial committee had been established to formulate a strategic plan to address the negative repercussions of polygamy, which was still common among the Bedouin population. The committee, which included representatives of civil society and the Bedouin population, was examining ways to increase public awareness of the harm caused by polygamy and to increase law enforcement in that regard. It was also focusing on how welfare services could cater for the emotional and social needs of women and children who had been harmed by polygamous marriage. Furthermore, the Attorney General had recently published a guideline stressing that the Supreme Court rejected any arguments in defence of the act of polygamy on cultural grounds. In 2016, a branch of the Legal Aid Administration had been opened in Rahat, the largest Bedouin city in the Negev, making the courts more accessible to Bedouin residents there.

9. Convictions in cases of sexual harassment had more than doubled over the previous two years. The Knesset had amended the Legal Aid Law in order to grant free legal aid to victims of grave sexual offences, with no financial eligibility test, with a view to helping victims of sexual crimes to overcome difficulties often experienced during criminal proceedings, including difficulties in making victim impact statements for the sentencing of accused persons or parole or pardon hearings. In August 2017, the District Court of Tel Aviv had ordered the closure of a strip club on the grounds that it had violated local planning laws. The Court had ruled that activities that violated women's human dignity, including the objectification of women in general, were incompatible with the laws, demonstrating the innovative use of tools other than criminal law in the protection of women.

10. Legislative steps that had been taken to further gender equality in the labour market included the extension of paid maternity leave to 15 weeks. Additional flexibility had been added to fathers' entitlement to paternity leave, including an amendment enabling fathers whose wives were self-employed to take parental leave in lieu of their partners. Women currently constituted 62 per cent of civil service employees in her country. In 2017, the Civil Service Commission had issued the Gender Equality Index report, which examined several gender equality indicators in every ministry. Each ministry had received a copy of the report and comprehensive information on its gender pay gaps. In addition, the Commissioner had issued a guideline that included transparent criteria for salary levels with a view to precluding wage discrimination.

11. A similar report was published annually by the Ministry of Justice, containing comprehensive information on employment. According to the 2016 report, 68 per cent of employees were women, and they also held 66 per cent of high-ranking positions. There were virtually no wage differences between men and women in the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, 51 per cent of judges were currently women. In 2017, two women of Ethiopian descent had been appointed as judges for the first time in the Israeli judicial system. In April 2017, a woman had been appointed for the first time to serve as a judge in a Muslim religious court. In August 2017, the High Court of Justice had reached a landmark decision, ruling that the criteria used to appoint the Director of the Rabbinical Courts must be relevant and applicable to both women and men. A woman had recently been appointed to serve as Deputy Director of the Rabbinical Courts.

12. In 2017, the law had been amended to add to the administrative sanctions that rabbinical courts could impose on husbands who had been imprisoned for refusing to grant the Jewish writ of divorce. The State Attorney had also issued a guideline in 2016 clarifying the fact that criminal procedures could be initiated against a spouse who refused to grant a divorce in certain circumstances, on the grounds that they were violating a judicial order.

13. In 2017, regulations governing the processing of asylum requests were amended to make them more gender-sensitive, including with respect to victims of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Articles 1 to 6

14. **Ms. Ameline** asked whether the State party would consider lifting its reservations to articles 7 and 16 of the Convention. At the least, she hoped that, in future, civil and religious courts would adopt a more consistent approach in their rulings on matters relating to women's rights in marriage and divorce. She wished to know whether the State party would consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

15. The lack of a comprehensive definition in the State party's legislation of the term "discrimination against women" that was in accordance with the definition in article 1 of the Convention meant that there was not a sufficiently robust basis for the explicit condemnation of such discrimination. She asked how the Knesset planned to address that. The Committee would welcome an update on the efforts being made to raise awareness in the State party of the Convention and to disseminate the Committee's concluding observations.

16. While the Committee was aware of the State party's position on its extraterritorial obligations in the occupied Palestinian territories, she wished to know whether it would consider extending the scope of its peace and security strategy to the territories. She asked whether it planned to evaluate the impact of the measures Israel had taken in the occupied territories in term of settlements, the destruction of infrastructure, the disproportionate use of force and the lack of access to humanitarian assistance.

17. It would be useful to hear the delegation's comments on reports that some human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations were prevented from taking action and deprived of their freedom of expression.

18. She asked how the State party planned to further harmonize positive law with religious law in order to ensure a more modern society. In the light of the fact that very few Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers had been granted the right to asylum in the State party, she would welcome more details about how refugee and asylum-seeker status were granted. Given the inequalities faced by several minorities, notably the Bedouin population, both in law and in practice, she would appreciate additional information on how women's rights were streamlined into the strategies to improve the situation of all minorities in the State party.

19. **Ms. Raz Shechter** (Israel) said that the State party's position on the inapplicability of the Convention to the occupied territories had not changed.

20. **Ms. Cohen-Bakshi** (Israel) said that, in light of the recent changes to the law, including the raising of the minimum legal age for marriage, her Government was prepared to embark on discussions on a review of the State party's reservation to article 16.

21. Personal status and family matters were regulated by two judicial systems, the family courts and the religious courts, but filing a suit in one court prevented the other from addressing the issue, which, in divorce cases in particular, led to a race to establish the most favourable jurisdiction. Many attempts had been made to do away with the "race for jurisdiction", without success. While the recently enacted Family Dispute Settlement Law could not solve the problem, it could reduce its impact, in part by preventing the escalation of family disputes and allowing for an agreed settlement.

22. **Ms. Dror-Shpoliansky** (Israel) said that Israeli civil society engaged in constructive dialogue with government authorities, actively initiated legislation and helped to promote and raise awareness about human rights. There were no legal restrictions on organizations' action to promote human rights. They enjoyed the right to freedom of association and of assembly in accordance with the law. The freedom of assembly must be balanced with the need to maintain public order and safety. The police were responsible for granting licences for demonstrations and could impose restrictions. However, the police also had a duty to protect demonstrations and demonstrators from harassment.

23. The State Attorney had issued guidelines on sentencing in cases of violence against journalists during demonstrations. Given journalists' importance to democratic society and the need to protect their ability to report freely and without fear, in certain circumstances, the prosecution could request a more severe punishment in such cases. In addition, a recent High Court of Justice ruling had emphasized that, although the law authorized the police to require a permit where the demonstration was of a political nature, its authority to do so must be interpreted narrowly.

24. International treaties were incorporated into Israeli domestic law by means of specific legislation of various types or by a court ruling. Customary international law applied provided it did not contradict the national law. Human rights treaties also constituted an important tool for the interpretation of national legislation.

25. **Ms. Kremer** (Israel) said that Israel currently hosted some 4,000 persons from Darfur, of whom 2,900 had applied for asylum. In 2017, the Government had decided that the situation in Darfur warranted an interim solution and had issued some 200 temporary residence visas on humanitarian grounds to those who met the relevant criteria. Asylum applications were considered by a committee that included representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Any individual granted refugee status received a renewable temporary residence permit. The Government reserved the right to review the situation in the refugee's country of origin and might determine that a refugee no longer faced danger if that situation changed.

26. **Ms. Tene-Gilad** (Israel) said that the question of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention was routinely considered by the relevant government departments and a decision would be taken when the issue became more relevant. The State party's report was published on the websites of various government departments in English, Arabic and Hebrew and was circulated to the legislature and the judiciary.

27. **Ms. Ameline** said that, on the issue of freedom of expression, her question had arisen out of an alarming report by United Nations experts clearly showing that the rights of journalists working in the occupied territories had been violated. Referring to the Committee's general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, she said that, in her view, the dire living conditions of some women in Gaza engaged the responsibility of the State of Israel. She would welcome the delegation's comments, particularly in view of a recent United Nations report stating that the economy of Gaza was probably no longer viable. On the question of asylum, she asked how many of the nearly 50,000 persons from Darfur, Eritrea and the Sudan, who were currently living in very poor conditions, in Israel had been granted refugee status.

28. **Ms. Hayashi** said that the Committee had previously recommended that the State party should adopt legislation defining and prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination against women. She would appreciate hearing how the State party was developing the principle of gender equality in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

29. **Ms. Schulz** said that, in three of the cases cited in annex 3 of the State party's report, the courts had invoked and applied both article 16 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 21 on equality in marriage and family relations, which interpreted article 16. The judiciary was apparently applying an article to which the State party maintained reservations. Noting that the question of *gett* — divorce documents in Jewish religious law — was not only a matter of religious jurisdiction but was also covered by State administrative, civil and criminal legislation, she suggested that the State party should take a broad approach to its review of those reservations, and she asked whether it was ready to lift its reservations on article 16 (1) (a), (b), (d), (e), (f) and (h). It should not be difficult to lift the reservation on article 16 (2) given the recent change in the law raising the minimum marriage age to 18.

30. **Ms. Raz Shechter** (Israel) said that Israel had very little room to act in Gaza. It did not occupy Gaza, having withdrawn from that territory unilaterally. The terrorist organization Hamas was in complete control of all that happened there. Nevertheless, Israel was doing as much as it could to alleviate the economic situation. Hundreds of trucks brought products into the territory every day through the border crossing from Israel. In addition, Israel ran programmes for the empowerment of women in Gaza.

31. **Ms. Tene-Gilad** (Israel) said that, notwithstanding the absence of a Constitution, Israel took the principles of non-discrimination and equality between women and men extremely seriously. The large body of law on such matters and the rulings of the Supreme Court attested to the fact that non-discrimination and equality were principles rooted in the fabric of Israeli law.

32. **Ms. Cohen-Bakshi** (Israel) said that the Supreme Court's rulings tended to confirm the basic right to equality. In a recent case, it had emphasized that an attempt to reimpose the status of *aguna*, a term for a Jewish woman whose husband refused or was unable to give her a divorce, was a violation of the woman's basic right to human dignity under the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty, and a denial of her liberty, which the Court had deemed unconstitutional.

33. **Ms. Hayashi** said that the Committee had previously recommended that the State party should adopt a comprehensive national plan for the advancement of women, yet the report referred only to an action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). She would appreciate some information on plans to adopt a comprehensive national action plan covering significant areas of the Convention and providing benchmarks and a time frame for achievement of its medium and long-term goals. In that regard, she asked whether the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women was responsible for collecting the gender-disaggregated data that should form the basis of a national policy. Noting that the Authority had a rather broad mandate, she said that she would like to know more about its mandate to monitor the implementation of policy and legislation.

34. The delegation's opening statement had referred to the introduction of gender analyses of ministerial budgets, and she wondered what the consequences might be if such an analysis revealed shortcomings in a ministry's approach. Would the Authority be entitled to modify the budget, for example?

35. Referring to the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice, she pointed out that the Committee considered it important for a State party to establish a single national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles, in order to provide women with adequate access to justice and, notably, a complaints procedure. Th victims of discrimination required access to affordable justice from bodies that understood ntersectional discrimination — of particular importance in a multiracial and multicultural society such as Israel.

36. **Ms. Rana** said that, despite the success of the Team of Directors referred to in the report (para. 113) in increasing the representation of women on boards of State-owned companies, Israeli Arab women still accounted for only 0.5 per cent of applicants to the Team. She welcomed the programme put in place by the Government to increase awareness and encourage more diversity in the Team, but she would like to know more about the goals of the programme and the timeline for achieving them.

37. Referring to attempts by a rabbi during the latest elections to the Knesset to deter Orthodox women from standing in the elections, she asked what special measures and penalties were in place to address religious coercion of that kind and prevent its recurrence, including political parties that applied such ideologies. Although explicit legislation mandating adequate representation of women existed in the State party, it did not appear to be enforced, particularly in religious contexts such as the appointment of rabbis and appointments to rabbinical courts. Given that the lack of political representation of ultra-Orthodox women had a negative impact on the enjoyment of other rights, she would like to know whether the State party was considering temporary special measures in order to enforce the relevant legislation.

38. The State party had reported that women accounted for 26 per cent of the police force. Were those women spread throughout the ranks and, if not, were there any measures to encourage women's inclusion at higher ranks? Noting that over half of the 725 judges in Israel were women, she said that only 9 of those women were Muslim. She wondered why the numbers were so low, whether any of those women identified themselves as Palestinian and what special measures were in place to increase the representation of Muslims in the Israeli judiciary.

39. Alternate sources reported discrimination against Haredi women on public transport and in education; they were even banned from certain streets. She enquired what special measures were in place to end direct discrimination against Haredi women and, conversely, to promote women's participation and prominence in the public arena.

40. Palestinian women leaving the West Bank to work in Jerusalem were reportedly being stopped and, along with their children, searched at checkpoints, a process that could take up to two hours of their travel time. Some were being assaulted during searches. She would like to know what the State party was doing to address that situation.

41. **Ms. Palmor** (Israel) said that Israel was very concerned about the participation of Muslim citizens in the judicial system. A fair proportion of male judges were Muslim and it was not clear why there were so few Muslim women judges.

42. There was as yet no comprehensive plan of action on the advancement of women, not least because it had taken a long time for the minister responsible for the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women to find the right person to head that body. The new head had just taken office.

43. Ministries were required to report to the Government on their budgets each year. All ministries were eager to show that their budgets were truly gender-sensitive, but there were no formal consequences if that was not the case. The single human rights institution was a frequent topic of discussion. The issue was not whether or not to create such an institution but how to set about it in a context where no ministry wished to relinquish its own brief for particular human rights questions. Only two of the plethora of political parties in Israel had no women members. The exclusion of women had been condemned by the Attorney General.

44. **Ms. Kabaha** (Israel) said that the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women had launched a programme to facilitate the integration of unemployed Arab women into the labour market by providing them with careers advice and other forms of support. The Authority was also working to encourage more Arab schoolgirls to pursue technological studies. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission had itself undertaken an awareness-raising campaign to encourage more Arab women to avail themselves of its services. An index to measure the level of diversity and to track wages in 20 major companies in the Israeli labour market had been launched in December 2016. The Government Companies Authority had, with the assistance of the Commission, issued guidance to all the companies coming under its authority emphasizing the importance of having a diverse workforce and the need to include members of the Arab population. The Commission had also launched a three-year plan aimed at enhancing the diversity of key government companies. Under the plan, at least 10 per cent of the employees of such companies had to belong to the Arab community. The Commission was also working with government companies to increase the number of Arab women occupying director positions.

45. **Ms. Palmor** (Israel) said that there were 219 female judges currently serving in the country's magistrate courts, the vast majority of whom were Jewish. While the fact of belonging to the Jewish or Arab community was taken into account when appointing judges, the fact of being Muslim or Christian was not. The percentage of Arab women studying law, or potential female judges, and not the percentage of Arab women making up the country's population, should be used as the benchmark for comparing the percentage of female Arab judges to that of female Jewish, Muslim or Christian judges.

46. The five-year programme aimed at integrating the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community into the higher education system through the setting of targets, run by the Council for Higher Education, was due to end in 2017. However, ultra-Orthodox Jews attended separate higher education institutions adapted to their specific cultural and academic needs. Around 70 per cent of the programme's beneficiaries were women. Since the programme's inception, some 1,800 women had received a scholarship under the programme.

47. The integration of traditional groups, such as the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, into the labour market and the education system continued to pose a significant challenge to the Government and was the source of much discussion in Israeli society. The Government was constantly searching for innovative ways and means to integrate that community into

the system and ensure that future generations of ultra-Orthodox Jews would be able to attend mainstream higher education institutions.

48. **Ms. Ameline** said that the Sustainable Development Goals could provide a useful framework for new policy measures to promote and protect women's rights at the local and national level. The State party also had a duty to ensure that its equality and diversity policies catered to the specific needs of minority groups.

49. **Ms. Rana** said that she would appreciate it if the delegation could comment on reports that Palestinian women were often assaulted at Israeli checkpoints. Noting that binding targets for the appointment of women had been introduced in a number of government departments and that failure to meet those targets could result in a reduction in budget allocations, she asked whether that policy was enforced in practice and, if so, which government departments had suffered budget cuts. Recalling that women's participation in peace negotiations tended to be extremely low, she asked what measures the State party had taken to remedy that situation and to give effect to the Committee's general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

50. **Ms. Schulz** said that, according to alternative sources, the adoption of new guidelines on legal aid by the Ministry of Justice in April 2016 had led to a decrease in the number of applications for such assistance. Under the new guidelines, women's access to legal aid was subject to strict conditions. She asked whether the State party intended to alter the current system to avoid penalizing children and their mothers, who were most likely to fall into poverty. Female refugees and asylum-seeking women faced a similar problem but, as they were not registered as residents of Israel, they could not even apply for legal aid. She asked whether the State party might consider granting them legal aid without excessive bureaucracy, taking into account the obstacles that they faced, such as language barriers and a lack of documentation.

51. **Mr. Bahat** (Israel) said that a growing number of women were occupying high-ranking positions within the Israeli National Police. By way of example, the chief of the human resources branch was a woman. Furthermore, women served as brigadier generals and police commanders throughout Israel.

52. **Ms. Fefer Finarsky** (Israel) said that limitations on movement were only imposed when there were security considerations warranting them. There were checkpoints between the West Bank and Israel where a significant number of Palestinians with entry permits passed each day. Despite a number of those checkpoints being located in sensitive areas, passing through them was subject to only minimal security screening, which was only usually initiated when there were specific grounds for suspicion. In an effort to minimize the impact of security checks on the rights and religious sensibilities of women in the West Bank, the rules and regulations governing the Israeli Defence Forces required soldiers to deal with women in a manner that was respectful of their personal dignity and customs. Unless required for operational reasons, actual physical contact between a male soldier and a woman was avoided. Only a female soldier or police woman was authorized to perform a body search of a woman, who could not be asked to undress unless security considerations required it. Members of the Israeli Defence Forces received training on gender sensitivity and, since the beginning of 2017, 30 gender sensitivity courses and training sessions had taken place. All allegations of mistreatment were investigated and violations of the relevant rules and regulations were duly punished.

53. **Ms. Cohen-Bakshi** (Israel) said that, in Israel, legal aid was granted on the basis of a means test and the likelihood of the applicant's claim being upheld. In family proceedings, only the means of the applicant and not those of the family unit were tested, unlike in civil proceedings. Consequently, most single mothers were eligible for legal aid in family proceedings. While legal aid could be granted to a custodial parent on the basis of financial need, such aid was not available to a non-custodial parent. Given that the custodial parent was, more often than not, the mother, women tended to be granted legal aid more often than men. The recent change in policy had been the result of an appeal lodged with the High Court of Justice claiming that the previous policy was discriminatory in that women were provided with free legal aid in custody and maintenance cases, regardless of their financial

situation, whereas men had to undergo a means test. Under the current policy, the means of both parents were to be tested. However, the Director of the Legal Aid Administration could decide to waive that requirement if it was likely to cause harm to the child. In certain circumstances, a child could apply for legal aid independently. The implications of the current legal aid policy were reviewed periodically.

54. **Ms. Palmor** (Israel) said that the Ministry of Justice was exploring the possibility of increasing the budget of the Public Defender's Office in order to extend legal aid in Rahat and in the south of country.

55. **Ms. Dror-Shpoliansky** (Israel) said that, according to research conducted by the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, women's underrepresentation in local government was primarily attributable to a lack of awareness of the possibility of standing for election. The Authority had recommended that local authorities should enhance the transparency of their gender budgeting and adopt temporary special measures to help them achieve gender parity in high-level positions.

56. **Ms. Kabaha** (Israel) said that, as the civil service was the country's largest employer, the Government had taken several measures to encourage more Arab women to join its ranks, including providing them with a rental subsidy and reimbursing their travel expenses if they relocated to take up a new post, improving their access to vacancy announcements and increasing their representation in civil service examiners' committees. Regrettably, Arab women accounted for only 4 per cent of all civil servants. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission was working with the civil service to remedy that imbalance. The Commission had also encouraged the different government ministries to step up their efforts to enhance the diversity of their respective workforces.

57. **Ms. Tene-Gilad** (Israel) said that the Government understood the need to take the Sustainable Development Goals into account when drafting new plans and policies for the promotion and protection of women's rights. A challenge to the newly adopted guidelines on legal aid had been filed with the Supreme Court and several amendments had been proposed. As the challenge and proposed amendments were still under consideration, the status quo remained.

58. **Ms. Raz Shechter** (Israel) said that, since the establishment of Israel, the Government had expressed its desire for a resolution to the conflict to be found. It encouraged the Palestinian National Authority to strengthen its institutions, to do more to educate Palestinian women about conflict resolution and to involve more Palestinian women in the peace process. The Government would continue to provide opportunities for Israeli and Palestinian women to exchange views and to promote peace.

59. **Ms. Ameline** said that, despite the State party's efforts to combat gender stereotypes in Israeli society, the different religious laws governing personal status continued to reinforce them by promoting the stigmatization of women awaiting a divorce or whose children had been born out of wedlock. Moreover, the exclusion of women from certain fields of public and political life was unacceptable, not to mention undemocratic, and warranted a more robust response from the State party.

60. While the State party was to be commended on its efforts to break down the deep-seated taboo surrounding domestic violence in Israeli society, it needed to provide judges, particularly religious judges, with additional training on that subject. Minority women were often victims of multiple forms of discrimination and were exposed to forms of violence to which other women were not. She urged the State party to consider ratifying the Istanbul Convention and to adopt a comprehensive law against gender-based violence and domestic violence.

61. **Ms. Gabr** said that there was consensus among the United Nations human rights monitoring mechanisms that Israel was responsible for ensuring respect for international human rights standards in the occupied Palestinian territories. She asked how the State party intended to reconcile its international human rights obligations towards women with security considerations, particularly at checkpoints. She also wished to know whether allegations of the use of excessive force against and the ill-treatment of women at checkpoints by members of the Israeli Defence Forces and acts of violence committed by

Israeli settlers were routinely investigated. Furthermore, the refusal to grant Palestinians building permits, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the practice of night raids all had a disproportionate impact on women. It would be useful to know whether the State party had taken steps to promote a more positive image of Palestinian women in the media and in textbooks and the school curriculum.

62. Noting that there had been an increase in the number of Palestinian women and girls being placed in detention, she asked what measures the State party had taken to give effect to the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice and whether those women and girls had access to adequate health-care services and Arabic-speaking health-care professionals. The delegation might also comment on reports that female Palestinian detainees were sometimes transferred to prisons in Israel, which was unlawful. It was regrettable that women's rights defenders were often targets of violence and that peaceful protests were increasingly subject to criminal penalties. She would like to hear more about the civil society-led initiative to amend Israeli sexual harassment laws to afford women and girls in detention greater protection. The delegation might also clarify whether security officers were once again authorized to take their weapons home and, if so, whether the State party planned to outlaw that practice.

63. **Ms. Jahan** said that she would like to hear details of the steps that had been taken to align anti-trafficking legislation and programmes with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. She also wished to learn whether a formal mechanism was in place to monitor employment agencies in order to prevent the exploitation of female foreign nationals who had entered the State party with valid work visas. She would appreciate information on plans to increase the number of trained labour inspectors, social workers and interpreters in the agricultural and care sectors and to improve the capacity of judicial and law enforcement personnel, including police and border guards, in the identification and early referral of victims of trafficking and in gender-sensitive investigation methods.

64. She noted that, while the number of female asylum seekers in the State party had decreased, more effort was required from the authorities to address the lack of access to identification procedures and support and rehabilitation services for asylum seekers, particularly in outlying areas of the country. She would welcome information on the preventive measures contained in the anti-trafficking strategies that would reduce the specific vulnerabilities of Bedouin, Palestinian and Arab-Israeli women affected by forced evictions, displacement and punitive housing demolitions. She would appreciate details of the steps being taken to improve the management of the borders between the State party and the occupied Palestinian territories and to facilitate communication between the relevant authorities working to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation. It was unclear whether the National Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Knesset Subcommittee on Combating Trafficking in Women and Prostitution were mandated to address the issues facing women who were subjected to forced evictions and housing demolitions.

65. Given that victims of trafficking were only provided with rehabilitation services for a period of one year, she wished to know what measures were being taken to protect those women from falling prey to further abuse once that entitlement ended. She would be grateful for clarification of whether victims of trafficking received free legal assistance. It would be helpful to have further information on the safeguards in place to protect trafficking victims who chose not to live in shelters from arrest for immigration violations.

66. She would appreciate updated data, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, nationality and region, on the prevalence of prostitution in the State party. It would be useful to have an account of the measures in place to eliminate the online sexual exploitation of women and girls. She would welcome details of the status of draft legislation aimed at criminalizing the use of prostitution services, including the expected time frame for their adoption, the measures envisaged to prevent prostitution being driven underground and the provisions that would be made for the rehabilitation of women who wished to leave prostitution.

67. **Ms. Palmor** (Israel) said that no negative stereotypes of Palestinian women existed in Israel. On the contrary, Israeli citizens found it shocking when they heard Palestinian

women praise their sons for carrying out terrorist attacks because they viewed all mothers positively.

68. There were approximately 10,000 people involved in prostitution in Israel, around 10 per cent of whom were minors. The Government was keen to learn from the experiences of other countries, including Sweden, that had criminalized the buying of prostitution services. The relevant draft legislation was still being finalized and decisions had not yet been taken on the criminal or administrative penalties that would be imposed under the law.

69. A new unit had been set up to coordinate the fight against trafficking. Guidance was provided to the police, the prison service and other actors such as hotel owners regarding the reporting of trafficking activities and the identification of victims. The authorities provided victims with free legal assistance. A project involving the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services and the Ministry of Justice was being set up to rehabilitate persons who had been victims of kidnapping, ransom and torture in the Sinai desert.

70. **Ms. Cohen-Bakshi** (Israel) said that religious judges received training on domestic violence and cooperated with social workers in efforts to remove the stigma attached to it. The film *Gett: The Trial of Viviane Ansalem*, a drama depicting the struggles faced by a woman whose husband had refused to consent to a divorce, had been screened at an annual gathering of rabbinical judges in 2015.

71. **Ms. Dror-Shpoliansky** (Israel) said that the transfer of Palestinian detainees to prisons inside Israel had been the subject of judicial review by the High Court of Justice on a number of occasions. The Court had found the practice to be lawful and had highlighted the improved conditions of detention following the replacement of the Israel Defense Forces with the Israel Prison Service as the supervising body. It had also noted that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War was being applied to realities that had not been foreseen by its authors. The area's geographical proximity to Israel meant that the rights to visits and to assistance by counsel were not denied to Palestinian women held in detention there.

72. Amendments had been made to legislation in 2016 in order to enable the Minister of Public Security to permit private security guards to carry firearms outside their place and hours of work for reasons of public security and safety. Safeguards were in place, including specific time limits and the refusal of permission for individuals with a criminal record of violence.

73. **Ms. Lerer Shaib** (Israel) said that all schools in Israel provided instruction on respect between boys and girls and the prevention of gender-based violence and stereotypes. Special learning programmes were in place to encourage relationships based on honour and equality.

74. **Ms. Fefer Finarsky** (Israel) said that planning and zoning legislation was enforced in the West Bank in accordance with the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and was applied without discrimination between Israeli and Palestinian constructions in order to ensure the proper allocation of public resources and prevent unauthorized control of land. Rigorous safeguards were in place during the enforcement process and decisions were subject to judicial review by the High Court of Justice. The Government took the position that it would not enforce demolition orders affecting Bedouin populations, who were semi-nomadic and mostly resided illegally on land that did not belong to them, if it was not able to offer them alternative housing.

75. **Ms. Ben-Zvi** (Israel) said that all inmates entering a facility run by the Israel Prison Service were examined by a physician within 24 hours of their arrival and upon request during their incarceration. Decisions on medical treatment were taken by medical personnel only. The Prison Service had no control over the dates on which medical appointments were made for prisoners requiring care outside prison facilities, which were arranged by the relevant hospitals or clinics. Prison Service personnel facilitated communication with hospital staff for inmates who spoke Arabic.

76. **Mr. Bahat** (Israel) said that police officers were taught to respect all protesters in demonstrations. If the police received advance notification that a demonstration involving

women was planned, it ensured that female officers were assigned to it. In 2017, a new unit had been set up to fight online sex offences. In addition to responding to complaints of such offences, the unit actively searched for paedophiles operating on the Internet.

77. **Ms. Tene-Gilad** (Israel) said that her Government was continuing to consider the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Amendments had been made in 2014 to the legislation on obscene publications to encompass online access to and the streaming of pornographic material. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education had run a programme over three years to teach schoolchildren about the dangers of Internet pornography.

78. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would welcome the delegation's comments on how the Government planned to implement the Committee's general recommendations No. 33 on women's access to justice and No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19. It was unclear whether the authorities only demolished homes for which construction permits had not been issued. She would welcome additional details of peace education initiatives.

79. **Ms. Ameline** said that addressing security concerns did not have to preclude guaranteeing women's rights. Better protection for women would have a positive impact on security in the region. She would welcome confirmation that women's shelters in the State party had adequate financial resources. It would be interesting to hear whether the Government intended to make shelters permanent and fully operational throughout the country.

80. **Ms. Jahan** said that she wished to learn about any steps the Government was taking to ensure that persons convicted of trafficking received sentences commensurate with the gravity of the offence and to tackle official complicity in that area. She would welcome data on the investigations launched and prosecutions brought in connection with trafficking since 2011.

81. **Ms. Palmor** (Israel) said that housing demolitions were not only carried out on Bedouin settlements; in 2017 the Jewish settlement of Amona had also been demolished. The Authority for Development and Housing of the Bedouins in the Negev was responsible for addressing the complex legal issues surrounding landownership. A previous agreement between the State and the Bedouin community that had guaranteed a piece of land for every Bedouin woman had been criticized as encouraging the practice of polygamy. Information on the provision of services for victims of trafficking beyond the initial 12-month entitlement period would be provided in writing.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.